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Problems of underachievement were studied. The project was envisioned in 1963 when the governor learned that fewer than 80 percent of the young people in the State from 14 to 17 years of age were in school. He proposed that an experimental school be established to discover why IQ scores often showed ability not reflected by school performance. Financing was arranged on a State, Federal, and private basis. Supervision was vested in the Learning Institute of North Carolina, an agency created to supervise a variety of educational experiments.

In 1964 four sessions were held with different students and different visiting teachers. Students were eighth-grade boys. Selection of the 350 students included: youngsters with IQ scores of average or better, but at least two grades behind their age group in academic performance; and boys whose test scores indicated better than average intelligence and the potential for better than average academic performance, but whose grades belied the promise of both. The school was residential; no fees were charged. One technique used was to assign each student to a project of his own choice. Even with new methods of instruction, students kept abreast of their regular school work. There were no grades and no report cards, but a full report on each student was sent to his home. The school, operating in a Southern setting, was biracial.

Conclusions were that outside interference and desegregation in a Southern school were not problems; few discipline problems were encountered; the concept that underachievers do not care was unjustified; and the children enjoyed the benefits.

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By Chester Davis

A standard test indicates plainly that a pupil "can do." The classroom record of that same pupil shows just as plainly that he doesn't.

Why?

A search for answers and remedies is under way in Winston-Salem at the North Carolina Advancement School. Terry Sanford, then governor of his state, turned to the under-achievement question in 1963. Appalled by the problem of school dropouts, and having preached that education is the essential first step toward economic development, the Governor was shocked to learn that in almost a third of the state's counties, fewer than 80 per cent of the 14- to 17-year-olds were in school.

"A school system in which half of the children never graduate from high school is not yet out of the woods," Sanford told North Carolinians. He complained that the state invested about a quarter-billion dollars a year in public school education but failed to provide proportionately for research. Pointing to the under-achievers—many of them potential dropouts—the Governor asked: "*Why* don't these children get enough out of school?"

Sanford's desire for answers led him to the Carnegie Corporation. He proposed that an experimental school be established in North Carolina to discover why a pupil's IQ test scores often showed ability above that reflected by his performance. The Governor suggested that this school be financed by private funds for a three-year pilot period. After that, providing the school had proved its merit, it would be financed by the state.

Sanford was unable to raise from private sources the $3.5 million he sought. He did, however, arrange financing on a joint state, federal and private basis: $500,000 from the Carnegie Corporation, $1.5 million from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and $1.5 million from the N.C. State Board of Education.

General supervision over the new school was vested in the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC), an agency that Sanford created to watch over a variety of educational experiments that he had launched. Directed by Harold Howe II, former superintendent of the Scarsdale, N.Y., school system, LINC made the initial contractual arrangements which included a $1-a-year lease of a city hospital in Winston-Salem that was to be vacated in the spring of 1964.

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To head the new Advancement School, Howe employed Dr. Gordon McAndrew, a personable Californian in his late 30s, with a background in both public-school administration and educational experimentation. McAndrew formerly headed a Ford Foundation-financed project in the Oakland school system which sought to discover means to overcome "deficiencies characteristic of newcomers and culturally handicapped pupils" in the public schools.

McAndrew arrived in North Carolina in July of 1964, and immediately he was engulfed in the tasks of converting a former hospital into a school, recruiting a staff and arranging for the selection of a student body. LINC, HEW and the State Board of Education allowed him to operate under a loose rein.

The conversion job, which continues, ranged from adapting an X-ray department into living quarters for teachers to installing a closed-circuit television system.

McAndrew recruited most of the school's permanent staff from outside North Carolina, partly because he sought an uncommon group of specialists, and they were widely scattered. Partly, too, it was because teachers from the North Carolina schools, as well as pupils, were to be enrolled in the advancement program.

In the beginning, staff recruitment was difficult; but the staff problem eased rather quickly. There were volunteers like young Miss Sally Holden, who came to visit friends in Winston-Salem following a term in the Peace Corps, discovered the Advancement School, liked what she discovered and signed on as a member of the permanent staff. And some of the visiting teachers brought in from the public schools of the state--Miss Louise Watkins is one—were impressed by what McAndrew was doing and asked to stay on as a member of the full-time staff.

The staff is far more highly specialized than that of an average school. In areas of heavy emphasis, such as reading, the teachers are specialists. In the area of audio-visual aids, there are men like Bill Myers, a technologist especially trained in the use of educational hardware. The school's intramural athletic program is headed by Bill Saimes, a professional (Buffalo Bills) football player. That's the pattern. While predominantly white, the staff includes some Negroes.

In respect to students, some basic decisions were made in the summer of 1964. It was decided to hold four sessions—each with different students and different visiting teachers—a year. All students were to be boys, and all were to be eighth-graders. McAndrew says, "As a rule, girls do better in school, at least up to college age." The eighth-grade limitation was adopted because this grade often is remedial in character and because youngsters in that grade ordinarily are of an age when their parents will consent to their going to a residential school.

As a rule of thumb, the 12-week classes were to be limited to 350 selected students who would attend the school at no cost to them. There was to be one visiting teacher for each seven students. The visiting teachers were to be paid by their home systems. The Advancement School provides visiting teachers with $75 in incidental money and reimburses the local schools for the costs of providing substitutes.

Selection of the students was made on the basis of criteria that assured a student body of two general types:

- Youngsters with IQ scores in the average (100 points) or better range but who lag two grades or more behind their age group in academic performance.
- Boys whose tests indicate better than average intelligence and the potential for better than average academic performance but whose grades belie the promise of both.

As a generality, the approach to the first group most often is remedial in nature. With the second group, motivation often is the key.

In a series of regional meetings, McAndrew coached the public-school people on the type of students sought by the Advancement School. He emphasized that the school did not want—and was not equipped to handle—boys with deep emotional disturbances or with other psychiatric problems. This also was true, of course, of retarded youngsters.

The school sought the classic "can do but don't" kids and, even with these limitations, there was no dearth in raw material. McAndrew estimates that there are some 80,000 under-achievers in the eighth grades of North Carolina's public schools.

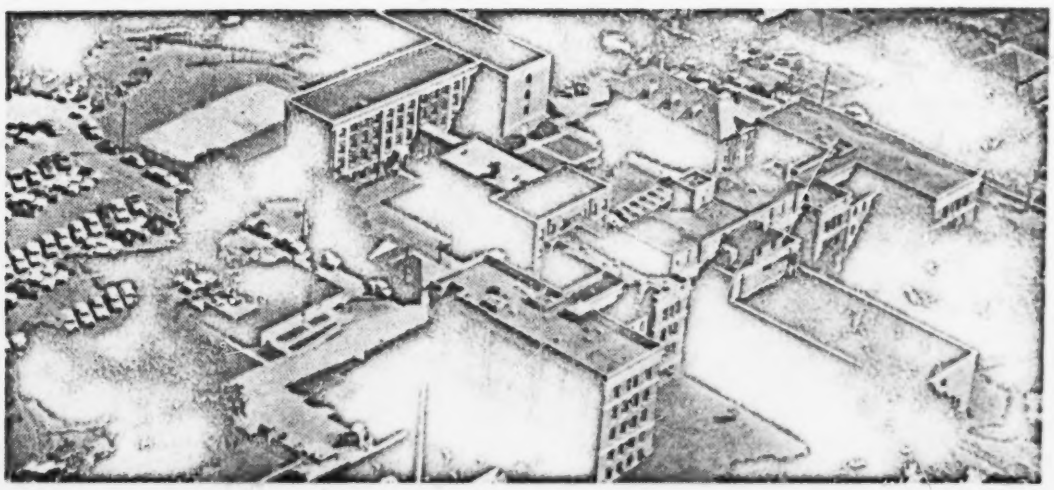
In the period Nov. 8 to Dec. 18, 1964, the Advancement School made a pilot run with a class of 82 students (selected from some 200 applicants) and 10 visiting teachers. This class was the start of a period of free-wheeling, trial-and-error experimentation.

McAndrew says, "There is no other school like this, so we had to experience it in order to learn. We had ▶

the student who can do... but doesn't

Gordon McAndrew . . .

. . . and the school he heads



to find the bugs and shake them out." During this test run, McAndrew was asked what his plans were. He replied, "You know what a juggler does. . . ."

Some educators have been mildly critical of McAndrew because he did not take a theoretical approach and, by experimentation, devise techniques that best achieved his theoretical goals. To this criticism, McAndrew replies, "Conventional theories and conventional techniques have been tried on these kids. They have not worked, or the kids wouldn't be here. We must not do the same things in the same way they are done in the public schools." If the N.C. Advancement School has one guiding principle, this is it.

Since the pilot class, the school has held two regular classes (one with 165 boys and the second with 285) and a special institute. Financed by the Ford Foundation, the institute (150 students and 100 school administrators and teachers) dealt with the special problems children from impoverished backgrounds (Negroes in the main) bring to desegregated schools.

In the beginning the experimental character of the school was so dominant that some of the permanent staff—and more of the visiting teachers—were uneasy because of the lack of firm guidelines. Instead of finding classes of a tidy, preordained size, they discovered that McAndrew was willing to place all the students in one class if that worked and, when it didn't, he might swing to the other extreme and try individual tutoring.

Some of the visiting teachers believed they were coming to Winston-Salem to watch master teachers at work. Instead they found that they were expected to pitch in and carry a full share of the teaching load. Ed McBride, a teacher from the Davie County system, and Harold Watts, a teacher from Gastonia, both reserved judgment on the school and its prospects after completing 12 weeks as visiting teachers.

Both men were skeptical of the possibility of transferring Advancement School techniques and tools to the public schools. For economic and other reasons, they questioned whether the small classes (17 or so as against 30 or so in the public school), the residential atmosphere or the emphasis on individual counseling were matters which readily could be transferred.

Most of the teachers interviewed by this reporter, however, were excited by the pioneering atmosphere of the school, thrilled by the results they could see in the pupils and confident that the school ultimately would find programs that were feasible for use in the public schools.

With the passage of time, and the constant refocusing on those teaching techniques which seemed to be most productive, guidelines of a sort have begun to emerge. For example:

- The Advancement School emphasizes remedial work, particularly reading. "Failure in reading," McAndrew says, "underlies almost all under-achievement."
- An almost equal emphasis is placed on motivation. According to McAndrew, "Half the battle with under-achievers is getting them interested." In this

area the school places stress on individual counseling. "Build pride," McAndrew says, "and these kids begin to respond rather than withdraw." His merit system (20 points a week for classwork, 10 points for athletics and 10 points for housekeeping) and the awards that are based on it (100 points wins a school jacket and 200 points a school sweater) quickly proved that point. In the first regular class, more than 30 boys won sweaters.

• No matter what tools and techniques are used, the students are kept abreast of the regular work they are missing in their schools.

• Since the school is residential, McAndrew insists on health and athletic activities. One aspect of this program is treatment by a full-time dentist. Many of the youngsters had never seen a dentist.

At the Advancement School there are no grades, and there are no report cards. Full reports on each student, however, are sent to that student's home school.

The school's program is more nearly tailored to individual needs than is the case in more conventional operations. Where McAndrew believes it is necessary, he has no hesitancy in separating students according to ability.

For example, the boys with IQ and achievement scores far out of line with their low grades are grouped together and deliberately challenged. One technique is to turn them loose on a project of their own choice. A group of seven boys in the spring of 1965 responded well to this technique.

Danny McKeown of Wilmington selected juvenile delinquency as his project. Eddie Paschall of Asheville built a solar refractor, Hank Harris of Goldsboro studied extra-sensory perception and George Pankiew of Waynesville, son of a civil engineer, prepared a model road plan for a section of North Carolina. Other projects ranged from archeology to constructing model automobiles and blue-printing an automobile assembly line.

Each of the boys spent five to six hours each day on his project. Their work, including both research, model-building and the writing of papers, was as penetrating or as superficial as they chose to make it. Their performance tended to match their previously unchallenged potential.

Dr. Hazel E. Naugel, the school's director of instruction, says, "In a regular classroom a bored student can tune a teacher out. When he's doing individual research, he competes only with himself, and he can't tune anybody out."

In this—as is the case in most other of the school's experiments—controls are kept to check one group against another. Since the number of applicants for the school exceeds the number accepted, most of the control classes (groups with whom those in the program are compared) are set up in the public schools and consist of applicants not accepted. In the case of the boys doing the special research work, the control was a class in a public school made up of boys with similar academic backgrounds who continued to do conventional classroom work.

When necessary, McAndrew sets up such controls in the Advancement School. If this seems cold-blooded to those who suggest that this denies the control group the possible advantages of experimentation, he points out that at the Advancement School personal benefit to the individuals who attend the school is a secondary goal.

McAndrew says, "At best we can't handle more than 1,400 individuals in a single year. This is a small fraction of the number of under-achievers in the public schools. So our purpose is to find out what works with these kids and then to encourage the public schools to make use of the tools and techniques which we have found to be of real value. Our job is research almost in the clinical hospital sense of the word."

All the curricular approaches are tried: words in color (reading taught with color cues), the Hurst program (teaching with film strips depicting real-life situations), the core curriculum and others. The tests are made with special groupings of students and, in many cases, with control groups against which results can be checked. McAndrew says, "We will try all the techniques we know and, on the basis of performance, adopt some, reject some and adapt still others."

In the remedial areas, tutoring is emphasized. Stu-▶

dent tutors from Wake Forest, Salem and Winston-Salem state colleges work two hours a week with Advancement School students. As a twist on this, McAndrew adopted an "each one teach one" program in which Advancement School students tutor youngsters in predominantly Negro local schools. "You learn something better when you have to teach it," he says.

Because the budget permits—and because it is part of the experimental purpose of the school—the Advancement School tinkers with every piece of educational hardware it can find: motion pictures, film strips, slides, record players, closed-circuit TV, a variety of automated reading machines and an equal variety of devices that permit an entire class, using electric signals, to respond.

McAndrew says, "We are a sort of consumers union. We locate, test and evaluate the latest of the educational hardware. We hope to test all the available media and tools in this area and to report our findings to the State Board of Education."

Some of the tools tested are too expensive for use in the public schools. Some, because they are limited to use by a single student, probably won't meet public-school needs. But many of the machines are economical and feasible for the public schools. The Advancement School seeks to find these tools and thoroughly check them.

By the time the Advancement School had launched its second regular class, McAndrew turned his attention to what he describes as the "re-entry problem." He says, "We knew what we could accomplish with these youngsters under the special circumstances which exist here at the school. What we had to find out was what happens to these kids when they return to their homes and to their regular classes."

To discover the answer, McAndrew named a "follow-up" field staff to check on the progress of school graduates once back in the conventional schools and back in their homes.

Perhaps the most clearly defined accomplishment of the Advancement School to date has been the experience in the field of desegregation. From the outset, this school—operating in a Southern setting—has been fully biracial. The number of Negro students—roughly 25 per cent of each class—has been in line with the North Carolina population ratio.

While most of the students never had attended a biracial school, the anticipated headaches did not materialize, McAndrew says. One of the results of this phase of the experiment has been that the Negro students, possibly because of pressure from parents and teachers, have made special efforts to prove their abilities. When the time came to announce awards won by the students in the second full class, Negroes won all of the school sweaters.

With the possible exception of this experience as to desegregation, it still is too early to announce any hard and fast conclusions regarding overall results.

The Advancement School has passed through its initial play-it-by-ear period of trial-and-error experimentation. McAndrew says, "We are now at the place where we can begin to focus on programs and techniques which we know have value. The third stage will begin when we think we have some answers which can be applied broadly and effectively in the public schools."

To date, this educational experiment has led to certain general conclusions. These include:

- Certainty that, given freedom from outside interference, desegregation in a Southern school is not, of itself, a problem. (Many of the educational problems of under-achievement are, however, race-related.)
- Discipline in this special school is no problem. On that point McAndrew says, "We have had some disturbed children but few disturbing ones." Asked how many children have had to be dismissed for disciplinary reasons, he says, "Maybe 10."
- The pat conclusion that parents of these children—particularly those from the poorer backgrounds—"just don't give a damn" is not justified.
- Tests given the children as they enter the school and, again, before they leave clearly indicate that the students enjoy immediate and measurable benefits. Dr. Lawrence Conant, who handles the school's research projects, says, "We know, for example, that the students gained an average of two months in their learning level for each month they spent here." Individual gains have been dramatic. One boy gained four years in the level of his reading ability after 12 weeks at the school. Two others showed a three-year advance, 16 others two years and 25 a one-year advance.

McAndrew is not surprised by such gains. He ex-

pects them. "Just being at this school—where they are treated as individuals and as if they are important—appears to have an effect on learning." He adds, "One of the first things we established was that the attitude of both the teacher and the taught is more meaningful than a student's IQ."

But the central question, that of re-entry, remains to be answered. McAndrew asks, "Will the gains made here persist back in the public-school setting? Can you export the Advancement School program back to the public schools?"

As of now, the answer to those questions seems to be a very tentative "yes." The preliminary results of the school's follow-up program indicate that the school is exporting its program to the public schools in at least one important form—student attitude and motivation.

There are, of course, the shining examples, such as the Negro boy from North Wilkesboro who ranked fifth in a class of 17 when he came to the Advancement School and who returned to his school to become number one. McAndrew can cite a number of similar cases. More commonly, however, the first reports on Advancement School students are along this line: "If this attitude of his continues, we think that he will make it." In most instances the school finds that public-school teachers want to keep the momentum rolling.

This will not be done easily in many cases. Take the youngster, one of a poor family of 12 children, who comes to the school with a hatful of handicaps including a marked lisp. When he returns to his home after 12 weeks at the Advancement School, the lisp is gone and he has a new confidence. But for how long?

"That boy," McAndrew says, "came to us from a completely disorganized background. How can he possibly make it?"

Right now Gordon McAndrew will not attempt to answer that question—or the larger question that lies behind it. He genuinely believes, as he once said, that the North Carolina Advancement School is "the most exciting experiment in education in America today."

A crucial assessment will come next year when the state of North Carolina itself weighs the Advancement School program and decides whether the progress made by the school warrants continuing this educational experiment on a fully state-financed basis. Men who have watched the Advancement School over the past year are optimistic regarding the ultimate decision. ○